

Appl. No. 10/813,250
Reply to Final Office Action of May 28, 2008

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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In reply to the final Office Action mailed May 28, 2008, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the subject application. Claims 3-8, 11 and 28-31 have been allowed while claims, 23, 24, 27 and 32-44 are rejected for obviousness. Claim 32 has been amended. Accordingly, claims 3-8, 11, 23, 24 and 27-44 remain pending in the subject application.

Applicants note with gratitude the allowance of claims 3-8, 11 and 28-31.

Claim 27 has been rejected for obviousness under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication US 2002/0009404 (the “Tsybulevskiy publication”) in view of U.S. Patent 6,482,316 (the “Bal patent”), U.S. Patent 4,354,929 (the “Wessels patent”) and U.S. Patent 6,395,950 (the “Rice patent”). Claim 27 recites “fractionating the desorbent containing sulfur-oxidated compounds from step (c) in a split shell fractionation zone to recover a desorbent having a reduced concentration of sulfur-oxidated compounds”, “fractionating the purge stream from step (b) in the [same] split shell fractionation zone to recover a purge liquid having a reduced concentration of interstitial hydrocarbons, “recycling at least a portion of the purge liquid having a reduced concentration of interstitial hydrocarbons recovered” in the fractionation zone to be contacted with the adsorbent to displace interstitial hydrocarbons and “recycling at least a portion of the desorbent having a reduced concentration of sulfur-oxidated compounds recovered” in the fractionation zone to be contacted with adsorbent that has been purged of interstitial hydrocarbons. None of the Tsybulevskiy, Bal, Wessels or Rice references discloses fractionating both desorbent containing sulfur-oxidated compounds and a purge stream in the same split shell fractionation zone and recycling separate desorbent and purge streams recovered in the same split shell fractionation zone to be contacted with adsorbent. In particular, the Rice patent does not disclose obtaining a separate purge stream from the fractionation zone and the Wessels patent discloses using the same material, normal hexane, for purging and desorbing and does not recycle two

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separate purge and desorbent streams from the fractionation zone. In the Wessels patent, the same stream from the fractionation zone is used for both purge and desorbent streams.

Independent claim 32 was rejected for obviousness under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the Tsybulevskiy publication in view of the Bal patent, the Wessels patent and U.S. Patent 6,019,887 (the "Ramirez patent"). Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 32 for obviousness. Claim 32 has been amended to recite that the fractionation of desorbent containing sulfur-oxidated compounds to reduce the concentration of sulfur-oxidated compounds is conducted "in a fractionation zone" and "fractionating the purge stream from step (b) in said fractionation zone to recover a purge liquid having a reduced concentration of interstitial hydrocarbons." Support for the amendments are found at page 11, lines 2-4 and page 10, lines 20-22 of the subject application. Claim 32 has been further amended to recite "introducing the purge liquid as the purge stream to the adsorbent having adsorbed sulfur-oxidated compounds." Support for this amendment is found on page 12, lines 1-4 of the subject application. Applicants respectfully submit that none of the cited references discloses or suggests fractionating both desorbent and purge in the same fractionation zone, the desorbent and the purge having different boiling ranges, recovering a purge stream from the fractionation zone and introducing the purge stream back to the adsorbent. In particular, the Rice patent does not disclose obtaining a separate purge stream from fractionation and the Wessels patent discloses using the same material, normal hexane, for purging and desorbing, so they cannot have different boiling ranges.

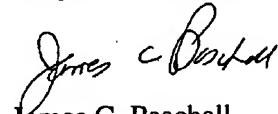
Because the cited references do not in combination disclose all of the recitations in claims 27 and 32 and claims 23, 24 and 32-44 depending from the latter, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of these claims. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claims 27 and 23, 24 and 32-44. The amendment to claim 32 gives it a breadth that is not the same but is similar to that already presented in claim 27, so the amendment after final does not change the scope of the examination and puts the claims in a condition for allowance.

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Applicants respectfully request entry of the amendment and reconsideration and allowance of all the rejected claims pending in the subject application after a final rejection. Should the Examiner wish to discuss the matter further, he is invited to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



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JCP/gm